

# Brain Development in Children

- Brain development proceeds in waves, with different parts of the brain becoming active at different times.
- The brain's ability to respond to experience presents exciting opportunities for a child's development.
- Windows of opportunity exist when the brain is a kind of "supersponge," absorbing new information more easily than at other times and developing in major leaps. While this is true especially in the first three years of life, it continues throughout early childhood and adolescence.
- While learning later is possible, it usually is slower and more difficult. Providing children with the best opportunity for learning and growth during the periods when their minds are most ready to absorb new information is important.
- Prime development years:
  - The "prime time" for visual and auditory development, or a child's capacity for learning to see and hear, is from birth to between 4 and 5 years old. The development of these sensory capacities is very important for allowing children, especially babies, to perceive and interact with the world around them. During the first few months, especially, babies need to see shapes, colors, objects at varying distances and movement for the brain to learn how to see. Babies also need exposure to a variety of sounds so their brain can learn to process that information and allow for responsiveness by hearing something.
  - The "prime time" for language development and learning to talk is from birth to 10 years of age. Children are learning language during this entire period. However, the "prime time" for language learning is the first few years of life. Children need to hear you constantly talk, sing and read to them during these early years. Respond to their babbling and language efforts.
  - The "prime time" for physical and motor development in children is from birth to 12 years of age. Children become physically ready for different aspects of motor development at different times. Large motor skills, such as walking, tend to come before the refinement of fine motor skills, such as using a crayon.
  - The "prime time" for emotional and social development in children is birth to 12 years of age. Differing aspects of emotional and social development, which incorporate higher capacities, such as awareness of others, empathy and trust, are important at different times. For example, the real "prime time" for emotional attachment to be developed is from birth to 18 months, when a young child is forming attachments with critical caregivers. Such development provides the foundations for other aspects of emotional development that occur as children grow.